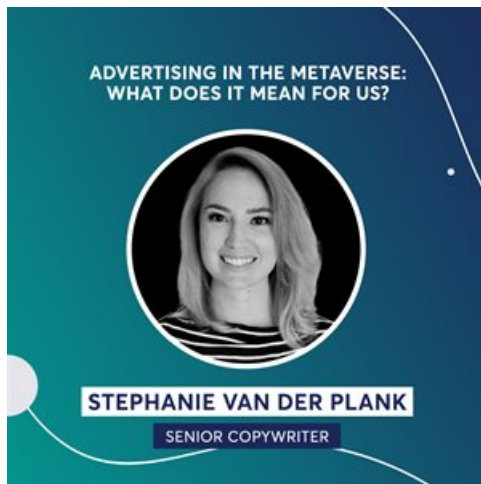


# Advertising in the metaverse: What does it mean for us?

By [Stephanie van der Plank](#), issued by [Clockwork](#)

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The metaverse has been on the minds of people in the ad world ever since Meta (previously Facebook) CEO Mark Zuckerberg delved into it during the Facebook Connect 2021 event in October last year. In this online event, Zuckerberg called it a "virtual environment where you can be present with people in digital spaces". He asked us to think of it as "an embodied internet that you're inside of rather than just looking at". While he didn't coin the term himself - it comes from the 1992 sci-fi novel *Snow Crash* - he believes in it enough to rename his company after it. This is future-forward and fascinating.



There's no doubt that this exciting new digital channel holds countless opportunities for gamers, business owners, developers, and virtually inclined individuals. But what does it mean for the world of advertising? What exactly is this new virtual environment? And are there opportunities for brands inside the 'metaverse'?

## What is the metaverse?

Remember that [episode of \*Black Mirror\* where Jesse Plemons' character comes home after work and logs into his own personally built universe?](#)

Complete with space stations and alien monsters? The metaverse is something like that, but hopefully without the sinister storyline.

In the metaverse, you have the power to surround yourself with whatever makes you feel happy and entertained. With the help of VR glasses or a headset, you can transform the world around you and incorporate aspects of your existing home or office space, with elements that could only be possible in a virtual setting. You can also create shared spaces and interact with friends and family all over the world in the same virtual setting. While several environments have already been built or created by the teams at Meta (and many other companies – does anyone remember Second Life?), in the future, anyone will be able to team up and build anything from games and apps to entire virtual worlds. According to Zuckerberg, the metaverse is about bringing people together and making connections.

From a practical point of view, the metaverse leverages aspects of social media, online gaming, virtual reality, augmented reality, and cryptocurrencies to allow users to interact – and spend – in a virtual world. It's essentially a combination of real-world elements enhanced through digital capabilities. And it provides myriad opportunities to push the boundaries of innovative advertising.

## How can we get our brands in the metaverse?

It's being talked about as a revolution in advertising – a grand statement that we're naturally curious about. Isabel Perry, Director of Technology at London-based marketing and technology agency [Byte](#), explains, "Metaverses are jam-packed with innovative marketing potential, ranging from live shopping to virtual stores, fashion shows, product launches, content production, live flagship events, enhanced social, pimping-up of Zoom calls, and [NFTs](#) paving the way for real economies. The possibilities that this hybrid digital/physical world offers are near-endless. It's time for forward-thinking brands to get involved." So it's about more than traditional advertising. It's about the way customers shop, experience, and interact with brands and products.

Even before the metaverse, we saw brands experimenting with this kind of next-level technology. L'Oréal was one of the first companies to incorporate augmented reality into their [offering](#). They partnered with Perfect Corp. to launch the YouCam

Makeup app, allowing beauty fans to virtually test dozens of L'Oréal products, and buy them through the app. And before the new Corolla Cross arrived in South Africa, [Toyota used WebAR](#) to market and sell the new vehicles. Customers could rotate and scale the car, change the colour, view a 360° image of the interior, and view a life-size 3D model of the car in their driveway.

The metaverse takes these possibilities to a new level. Successful examples of advertising in the metaverse include [Balenciaga's launch](#) of their latest futuristic clothing line that they revealed in a self-made dystopian video game, Afterworld. And there's the famous Fortnite-Nike-Travis Scott collaboration that saw the promotion of Nike's new Jordan sneakers in a virtual concert 'held' in the popular player-versus-player game. Over 10 million people attended that online gig. In all of these examples, customers are no longer experiencing products from a distance, but rather immersed in a digital space where they can view products and get to know brands in a more personal and intimate way. The best thing about the metaverse is that if you can imagine it, you can create it.

## Where to now?

When something as ground-breaking as the metaverse is introduced, there's always a concern that it might not take off. After years of social distancing and isolation, would people rather interact virtually than face-to-face? Or, has the pandemic made us more used to transacting online and spending time in digital spaces? Is the metaverse just a fleeting novelty for TikTok fans and Gen Z-ers, or is it here to stay?

In terms of advertising, we've come a long way since sticking posters on the sides of trains and merchants' wagons to get brands noticed. The tech boom and 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution is making its mark in almost every industry, and marketing is no exception. Today, advertising in the metaverse allows marketers to create engagement and intrigue, without being as invasive as some modern digital ad strategies. The only question is, are brands brave enough to make the move and embrace this new digitally driven platform? We'll have to wait and see.

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